

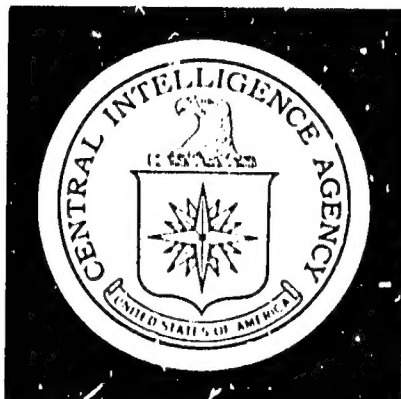
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Top Secret



DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

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Intelligence Memorandum

MOSCOW AND THE INDO-PAKISTANI CRISIS:
WATCHING WAR COME

State Department review completed

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3 December 1971

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3 December 1971

Moscow and the Indo-Pakistani Crisis:
Watching War Come

Summary

The spread of hostilities on the subcontinent focuses renewed attention on Soviet motivations in supporting India and its implications for possible Soviet actions in response to war. It is clear that in recent weeks Moscow has moved from a policy of opposing war on the subcontinent

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[redacted] Moscow has apparently acquiesced in India's campaign to maximize political and military pressures on West Pakistan, and the Soviets surely recognize the danger that these tactics could lead to an all-out war.

Moscow's policy in this instance is rooted in the felt need to buttress Soviet influence in India now that China has emerged from the self-imposed isolation of the Cultural Revolution. The Soviets apparently accepted India's determination to see the crisis resolved in a manner satisfactory to New Delhi and saw no point in spending their political capital on a fruitless attempt to restrain the Indians. Beyond that, the Soviets may hope that their present support for New Delhi will ultimately be translated into gains for the USSR, not only in India but also in Moscow's broader struggle with the Chinese. All these factors suggest that Moscow will not move vigorously to halt full scale hostilities on the subcontinent.

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated within CIA.

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Introduction

1. The policy of impartiality toward contentious issues in Indo-Pakistani relations adopted by Moscow at the time of the last Indo-Pakistani war in 1965 was largely the result of its desire to limit US and Chinese influence on the subcontinent. It was a policy that served the USSR well and in time allowed Moscow to improve its position in both Pakistan and India.

2. When the present crisis erupted last March, the Soviets first took a line similar to India's, but Soviet behavior suggested that Moscow hoped the crisis could be resolved without war. The Soviets took steps to prevent Soviet-Pakistani relations from falling into complete disrepair. They apparently feared that a divided Pakistan would be more susceptible to outside (read Chinese) pressure and sought to restrain the two sides from taking actions likely to exacerbate the situation.

Evolution of Moscow's Attitude

3. Moscow's view of its stakes in the present crisis has changed and attention now seems riveted on how best to exploit the present crisis to the USSR's advantage. During her visit to the USSR in late September, Mrs. Gandhi seems to have convinced the Soviets of the futility of trying to prevent the Indians from pursuing their goals vis-a-vis Pakistan.

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In the wake of Mrs. Gandhi's visit, Soviet propagandists launched a belated campaign condemning West Pakistani atrocities in the East and demanding the release of Awami League leader Mujibur Rahman, who had been in a Pakistani jail since late March.

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4. In October and November, Moscow cooperated with New Delhi in its campaign to maximize the political pressure on West Pakistan. Just before the Gandhi visit, there had been only one visit by a senior Soviet official to New Delhi (Foreign Minister Gromyko to sign the Soviet-Indian treaty). Just afterward, in October and November, there were several. President Podgorny stopped off in New Delhi on 1 October on his way to Hanoi.

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Between 22-27 October, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Firyubin visited New Delhi for consultations, it was publicly stated, under Article Nine of the Friendship Treaty. This article specified that the two sides will "consult with a view toward taking effective measures" in the event either party is attacked or threatened with attack.

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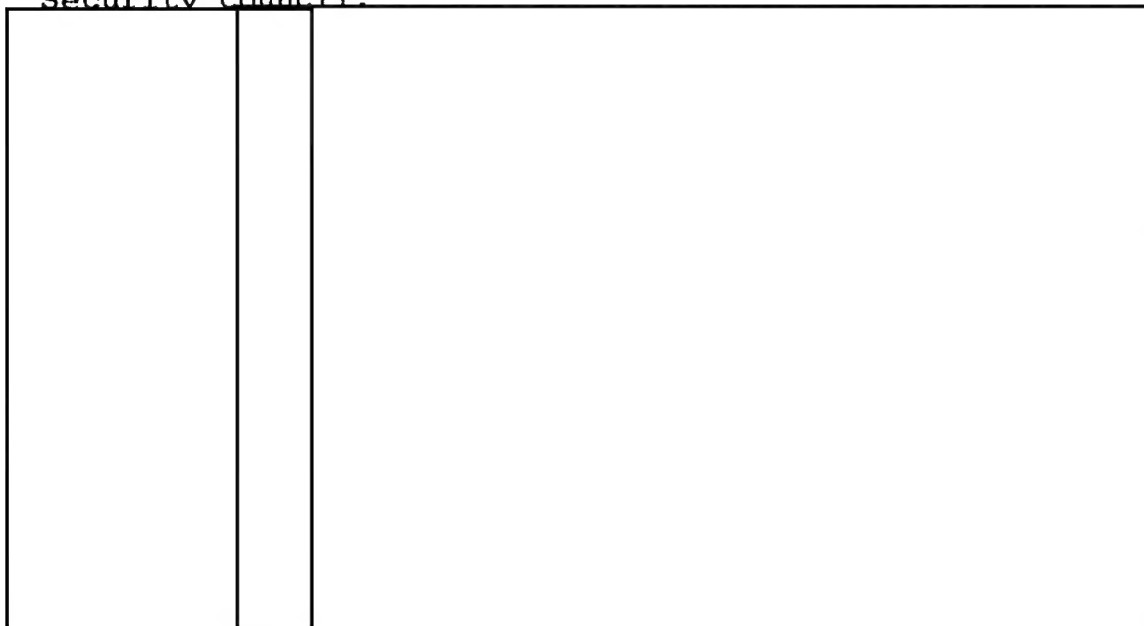
5. On the heels of the Firyubin visit, Moscow sent Deputy Defense Minister Kutakhov to India. Kutakhov, who is also the Air Force Chief of Staff, reportedly inspected India's air force, which is largely Soviet-equipped, and discussed additional military assistance. During his stay, moreover, the Soviets inaugurated a conspicuous airlift (10 AN-12s) of military assistance. This was the first concrete manifestation since the crisis had begun of Moscow's willingness to respond quickly to India's arms requests, and it was probably meant as a warning, addressed primarily to Pakistan, of the danger of war.

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6. Moscow also appears to have acquiesced in India's decision to increase the military pressure in East Pakistan. Although the Soviets have at times seemed to be calling for restraint, the appeals have been directed almost solely at the West Pakistanis. Soviet propagandists abandoned all pretense of non-partisanship and are portraying India as the aggrieved party which is engaging in purely defensive reactions to increasing West Pakistani provocations. The Soviets are also helping the Indians to prevent the UN from considering the crisis. They have already reacted negatively to Japanese and Belgian soundings on the possibility of bringing the matter before the Security Council.



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8. Moscow's apparent decision to stop trying to hold the Indians back probably resulted in part from its realization that Indian conditions for a settlement precluded any practical hope of a compromise settlement with Yahya. The efforts of New Delhi to convince Moscow of the seriousness of its dilemma seem to have been successful. At least Moscow now seems convinced that the Indians have the determination and the means to ensure that the crisis

will ultimately be resolved to their satisfaction. The Soviets doubtless see no point in expending their hard-won political capital on a futile exercise. Moscow also probably accepts New Delhi's argument that India must have a friendly neighbor on its eastern border. If an independent East Pakistan is to emerge--and the Soviets think this is a likely outcome--they probably prefer it to be established now when the "liberation forces" consist of essentially moderate Awami Leaguers still dependent on and presumably responsive to New Delhi's guidance.

9. Developments elsewhere in the world doubtless affected Moscow's decision to back India. Soviet policy in South Asia has long been formulated with an eye toward the Chinese. The Soviets see in India's 550 million people a counterweight to the 750 million Chinese and are anxious to make sure that these two potentially powerful countries do not join forces against the USSR. The announcement on 15 July of President Nixon's visit to Peking probably brought home to the Soviets the full extent of China's departure from the diplomatic practice of the Cultural Revolution. Moscow wasted little time in trying to blunt the effects of the Chinese moves and, where possible, even to turn it to the USSR's advantage. On the subcontinent, the Soviets were able to exploit India's own concern over US moves toward China, as well as New Delhi's present need for great-power support, to nail the Indians to the close relationship with the USSR embedded in the Soviet-Indian treaty of 9 August. Soviet efforts elsewhere in Asia, however, have not been very successful. The Japanese and the Indonesians, in particular, were less than enthusiastic when the Soviets scolded them out about improving their relations with the USSR. This probably increased Moscow's determination to buttress its position on the subcontinent.

If This Means War ...

10. Moscow probably hopes that India's demands can be met without prolonged large scale fighting--i.e., that Yahya will agree to withdraw West Pakistani forces from East Pakistan and allow an independent East Pakistan to be created.

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There is, of course, the risk that India's efforts to force a resolution of the crisis could take longer and cost more (in terms of Soviet political, economic, and military support) than the Soviets presently anticipate, but India's performance thus far has probably led Moscow to conclude that this danger is declining.

11. A key factor affecting Moscow's calculations is what the Soviets judge to be the limited chance of significant great-power involvement. The Indians do not need Soviet troops to accomplish their goals vis-a-vis Pakistan. Moreover, the Chinese, who have been very moderate in expressing their support for the West Pakistanis, seem inclined not to intervene forcefully. The Chinese will probably continue to provide military material to the Pakistanis, some vocal support and backing at the UN. Peking's posture since the crisis began suggests that this will be the extent of its involvement. The US has already suspended arms shipments to both India and Pakistan, and the Soviets probably accept Secretary Roger's assertion on 12 November that the US "would do its best to stay out of" another Indo-Pakistani war. These considerations make the situation quite different, in Soviet eyes, from that obtaining in the Middle East. For example, it is such calculations that seem to lie behind the relative equanimity with which the USSR apparently looks upon enlarged hostilities.

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13. Beyond that, the Soviets may see some gains accruing in their struggle with the Chinese. In Moscow's eyes, China is backing a loser. Moreover, the Soviets probably believe that they can exploit this development to delay a meaningful Sino-Indian rapprochement--one of Moscow's recurrent nightmares. Moscow has been aware that since the end of the Cultural Revolution in China, Peking has made certain conciliatory gestures toward India and that the Indians have not reacted negatively. The Soviets welcome any development likely to impede improvement in India's relations with China.

14. Already the Chinese have been forced to speak out more frequently on behalf of the Pakistanis. If the Chinese should decide to increase their political support for Islamabad or provide more military equipment, the Soviets will doubtless exploit such Chinese moves to try to sour prospects for a Sino-Indian rapprochement. The Soviets will counter any increase in Chinese support for Islamabad with a proportional increase in Soviet support for New Delhi.

15. If China does not increase its contributions to the Pakistanis, the Soviets would be delighted to blacken China's image as the defender of the small- and medium-sized nations and to show the rest of the world that the Chinese are the real "paper tigers." Moscow would be certain to point this out to third world countries, especially those on the periphery of China. The Soviets would probably take the line that China's inability to support one of its oldest and closest friends should make clear to those countries that their interests would better be served by improved relations with the USSR. The Soviets will doubtless extract all the propaganda mileage they can out of a situation in which China can be tied to a "bourgeois military dictatorship," while the USSR can be depicted as the champion of a genuine "national liberation movement."